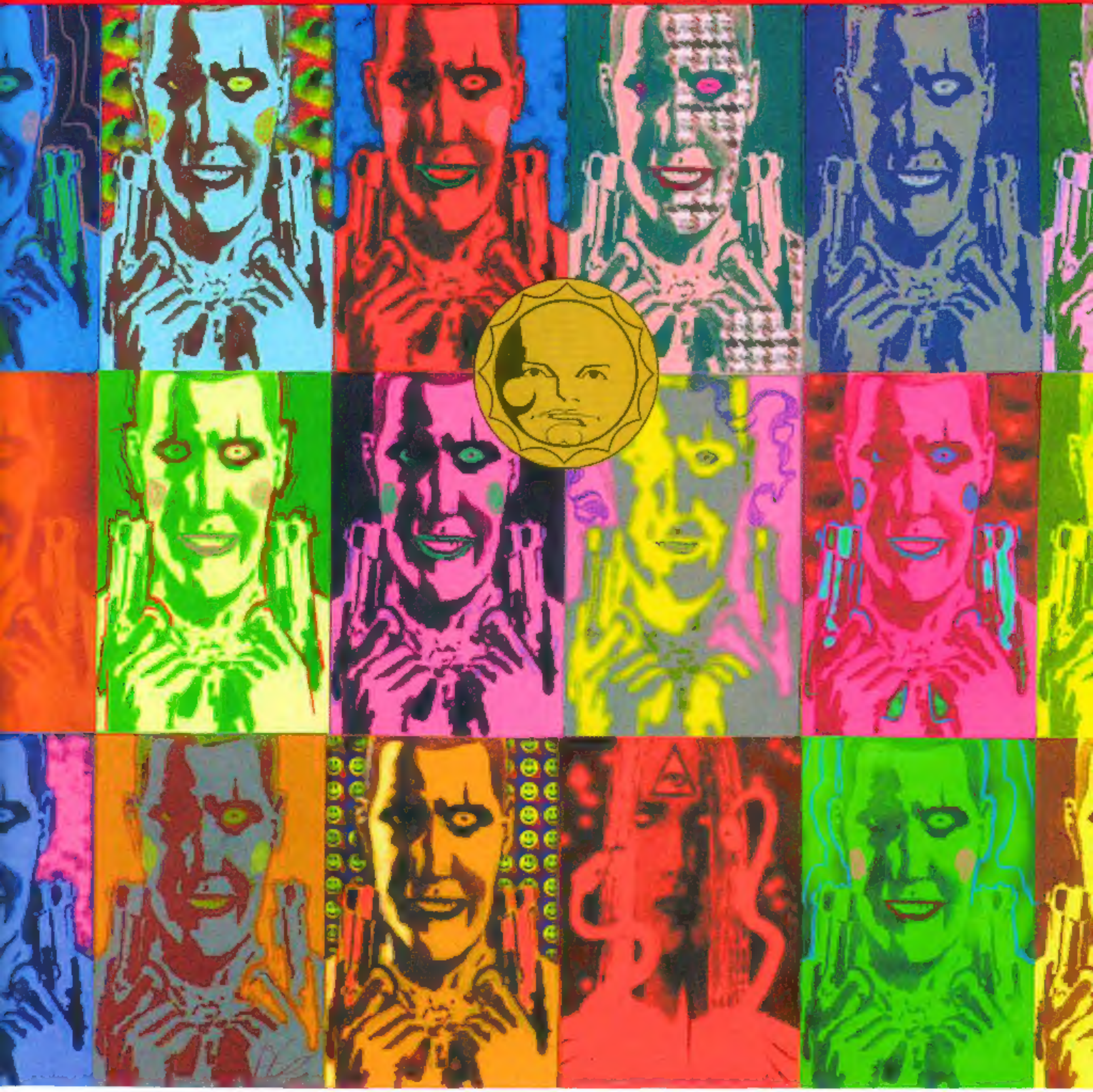
AMERICA'S BEST COMICS

29
MAY
2004

MOORE · WILLIAMS III · GRAY · COX · KLEIN

Promethea



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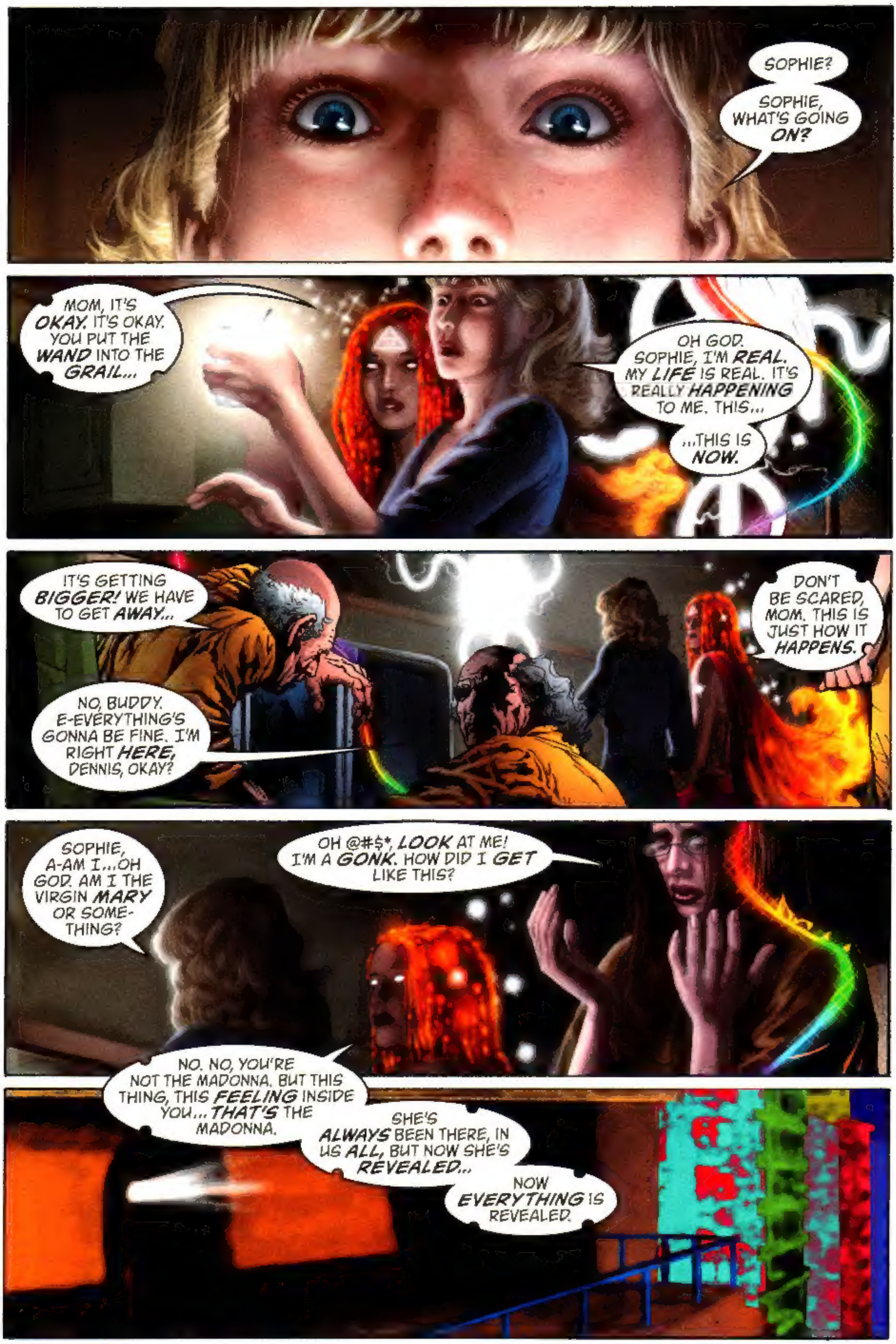
SOPHIE?
SOPHIE, WHAT'S GOING ON?
MOM, IT'S OKAY. IT'S OKAY. YOU PUT THE WAND INTO THE GRAIL...
OH GOD. SOPHIE, I'M REAL. MY LIFE IS REAL. IT'S REALLY HAPPENING TO ME. THIS...
...THIS IS NOW.
IT'S GETTING BIGGER! WE HAVE TO GET AWAY...
NO, BUDDY. E-EVERYTHING'S GONNA BE FINE. I'M RIGHT HERE, DENNIS, OKAY?
DON'T BE SCARED, MOM. THIS IS JUST HOW IT HAPPENS.
SOPHIE, A-AM I...OH GOD. AM I THE VIRGIN MARY OR SOME-THING?
OH @#$*, LOOK AT ME! I'M A GONK. HOW DID I GET LIKE THIS?
NO. NO, YOU'RE NOT THE MADONNA. BUT THIS THING, THIS FEELING INSIDE YOU... THAT'S THE MADONNA.
SHE'S ALWAYS BEEN THERE, IN US ALL, BUT NOW SHE'S REVEALED...
NOW EVERYTHING IS REVEALED.

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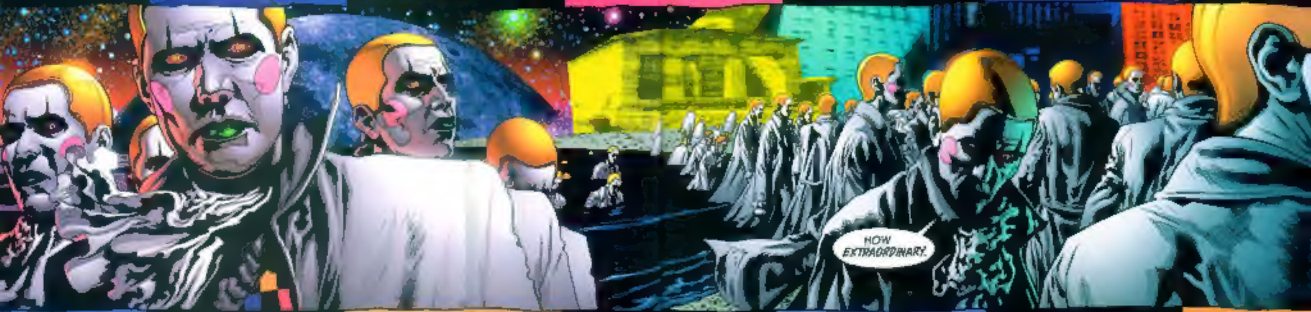
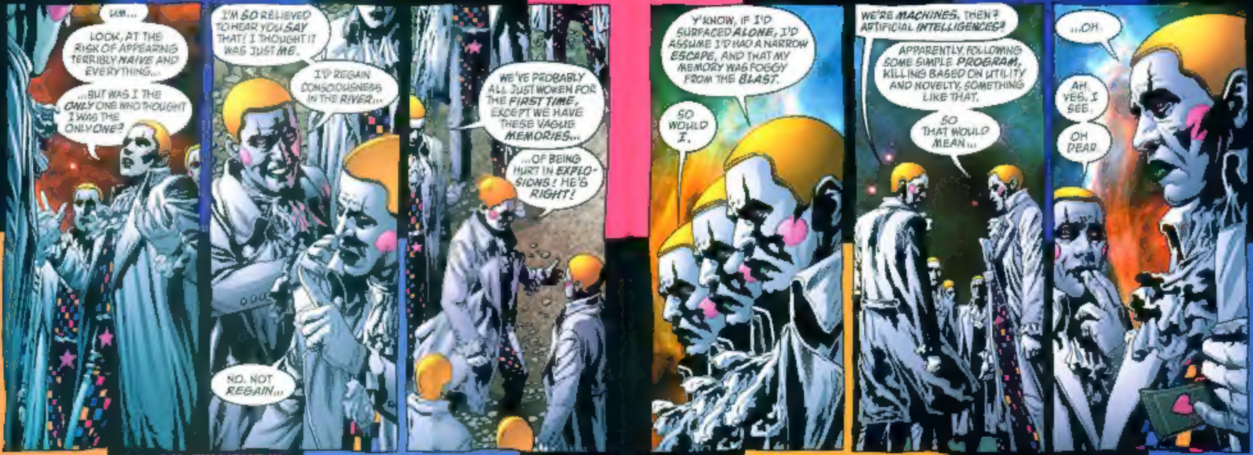

HOW EXTRAORDINARY.

PROMETHEA

VALLEY OF THE DOLLS


HM...
LOOK, AT THE RISK OF APPEARING TERRIBLY NAIVE AND EVERYTHING...
...BUT WAS I THE ONLY ONE WHO THOUGHT I WAS THE ONLY ONE?
I'M SO RELIEVED TO HEAR YOU SAY THAT! I THOUGHT IT WAS JUST ME.
I'D REGAIN CONSCIOUSNESS IN THE RIVER...
NO, NOT REGAIN...
WE'VE PROBABLY ALL JUST WOKEN FOR THE FIRST TIME, EXCEPT WE HAVE THESE VAGUE MEMORIES...
...OF BEING HURT IN EXPLOSIONS! HE'S RIGHT!
Y'KNOW, IF I'D SURFACED ALONE, I'D ASSUME I'D HAD A NARROW ESCAPE, AND THAT MY MEMORY WAS FOGGY FROM THE BLAST.
SO WOULD I.
WE'RE MACHINES, THEN? ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCES?
APPARENTLY. FOLLOWING SOME SIMPLE PROGRAM, KILLING BASED ON UTILITY AND NOVELTY. SOMETHING LIKE THAT.
SO THAT WOULD MEAN...
...OH.
AH YES. I SEE.
OH DEAR.

ALAN MOORE WRITER
J.H. WILLIAMS III PENCILS, INKS, DIGITAL IMAGES
MICK GRAY INKS
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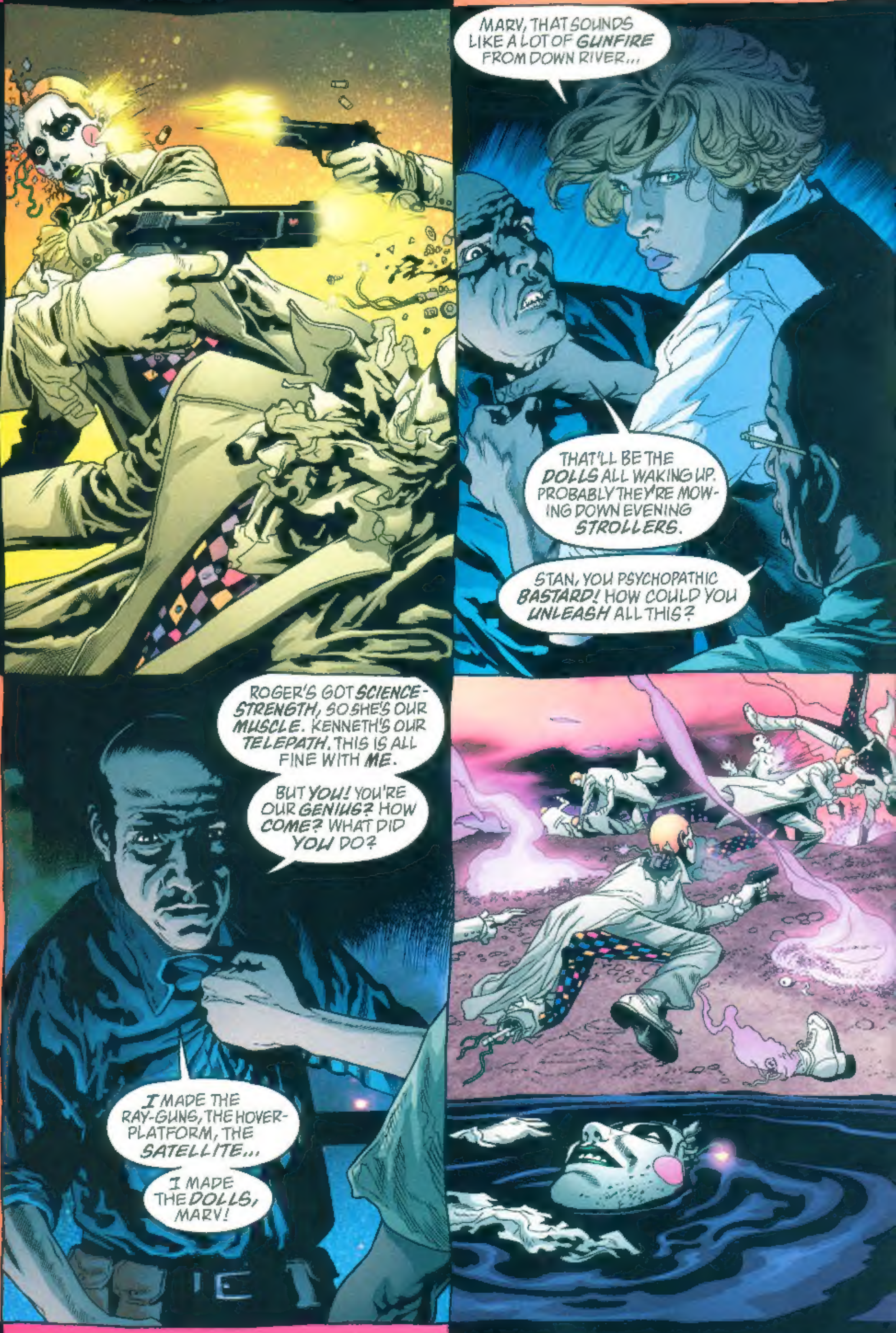
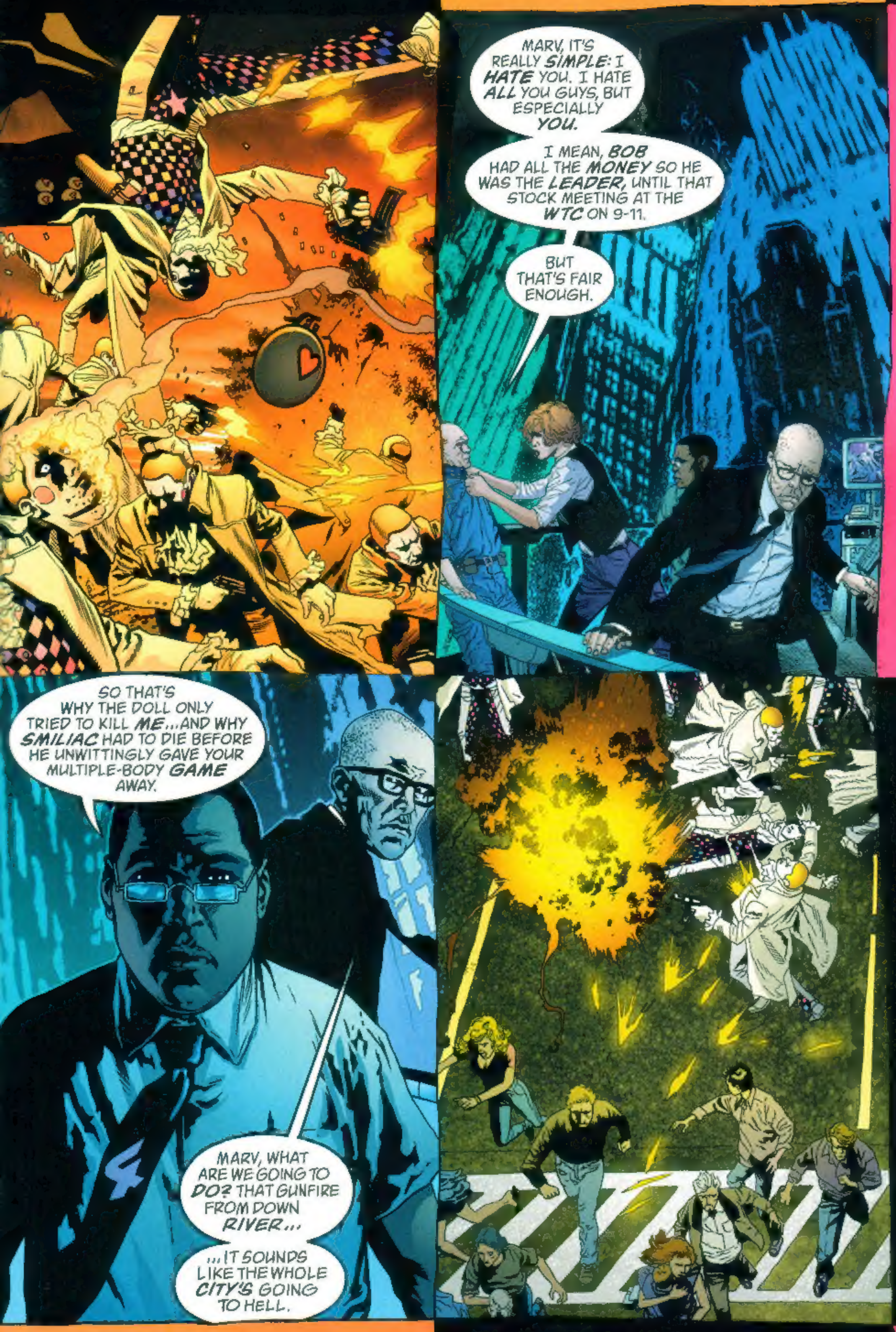
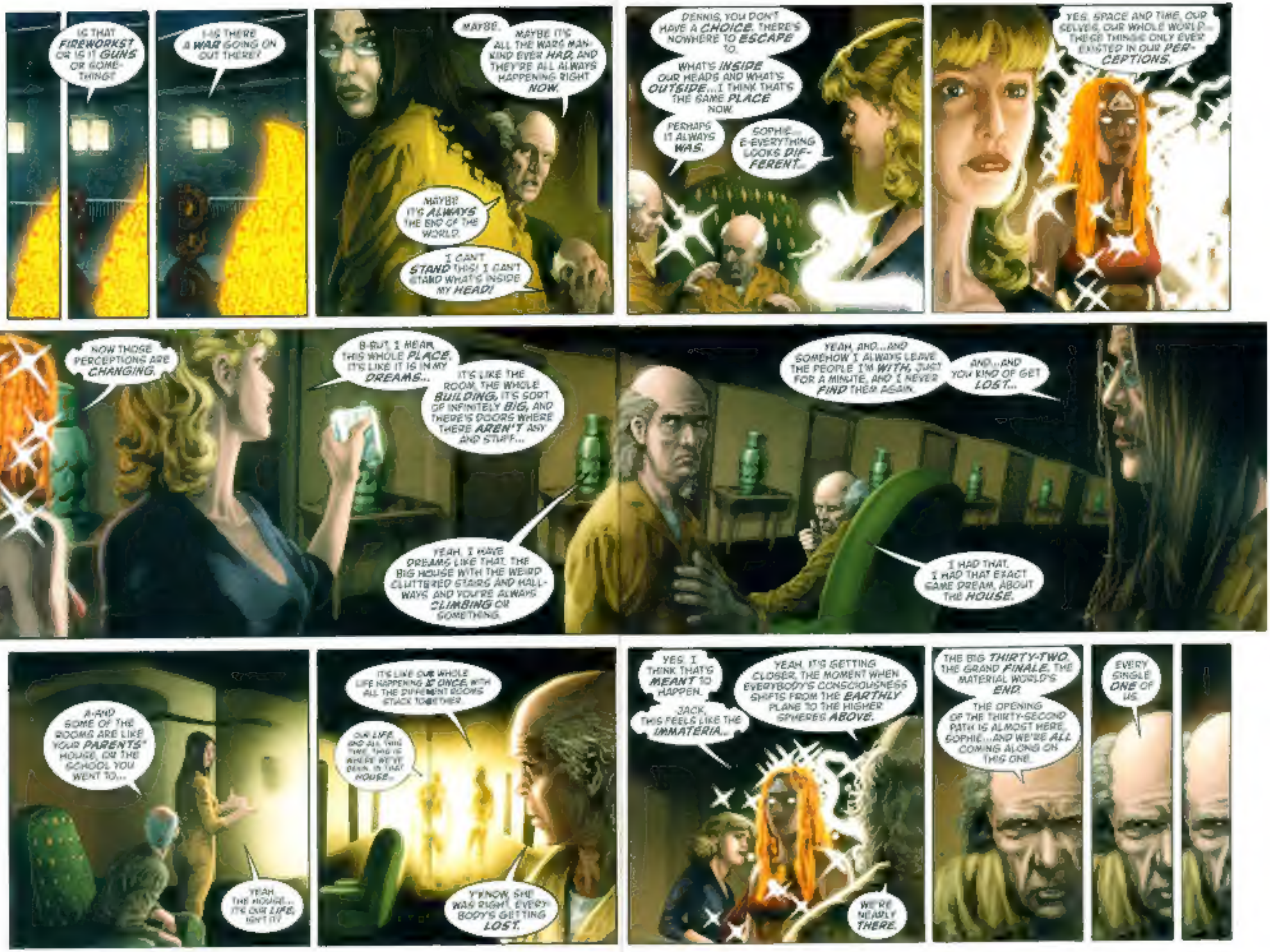
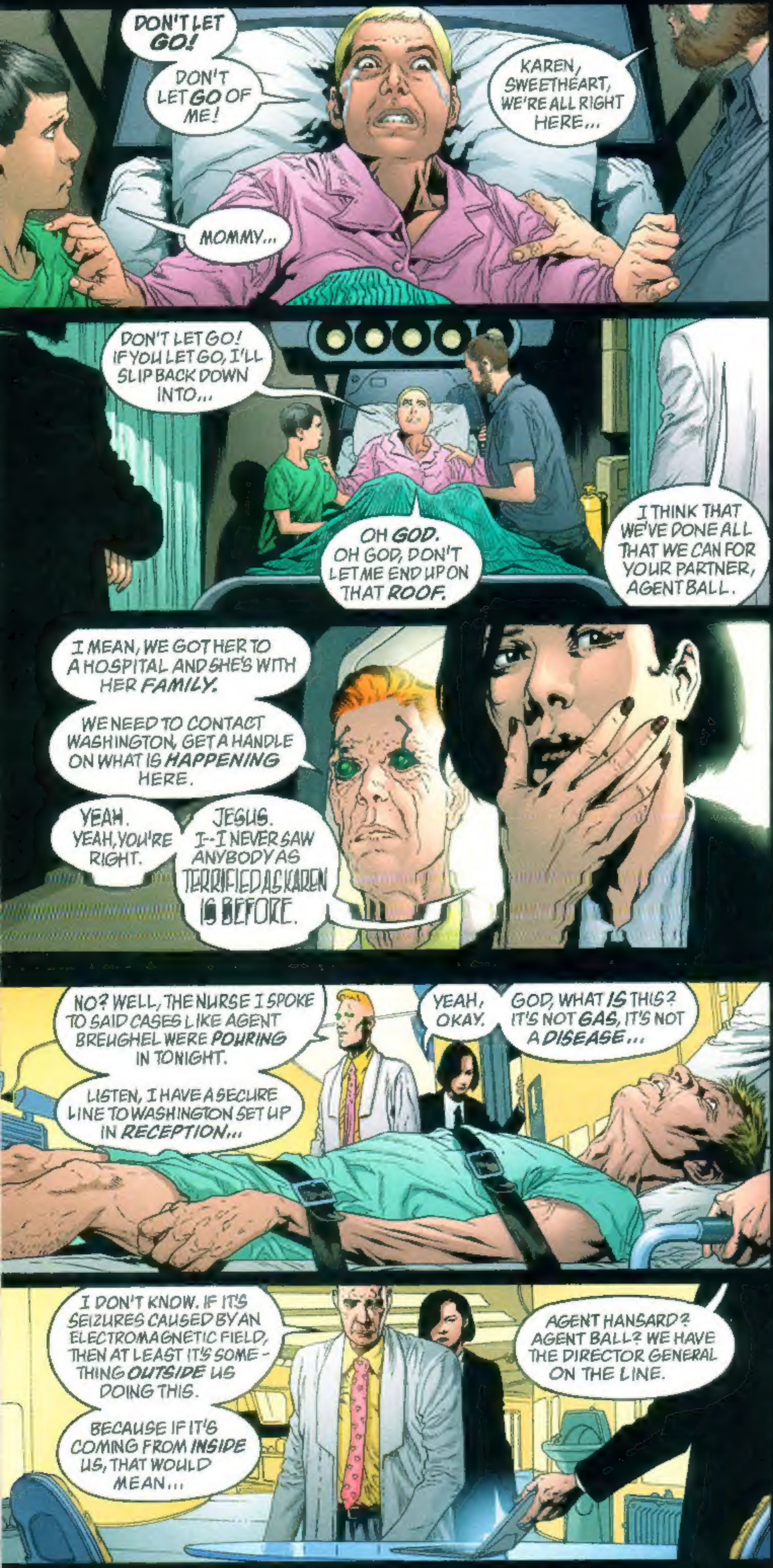
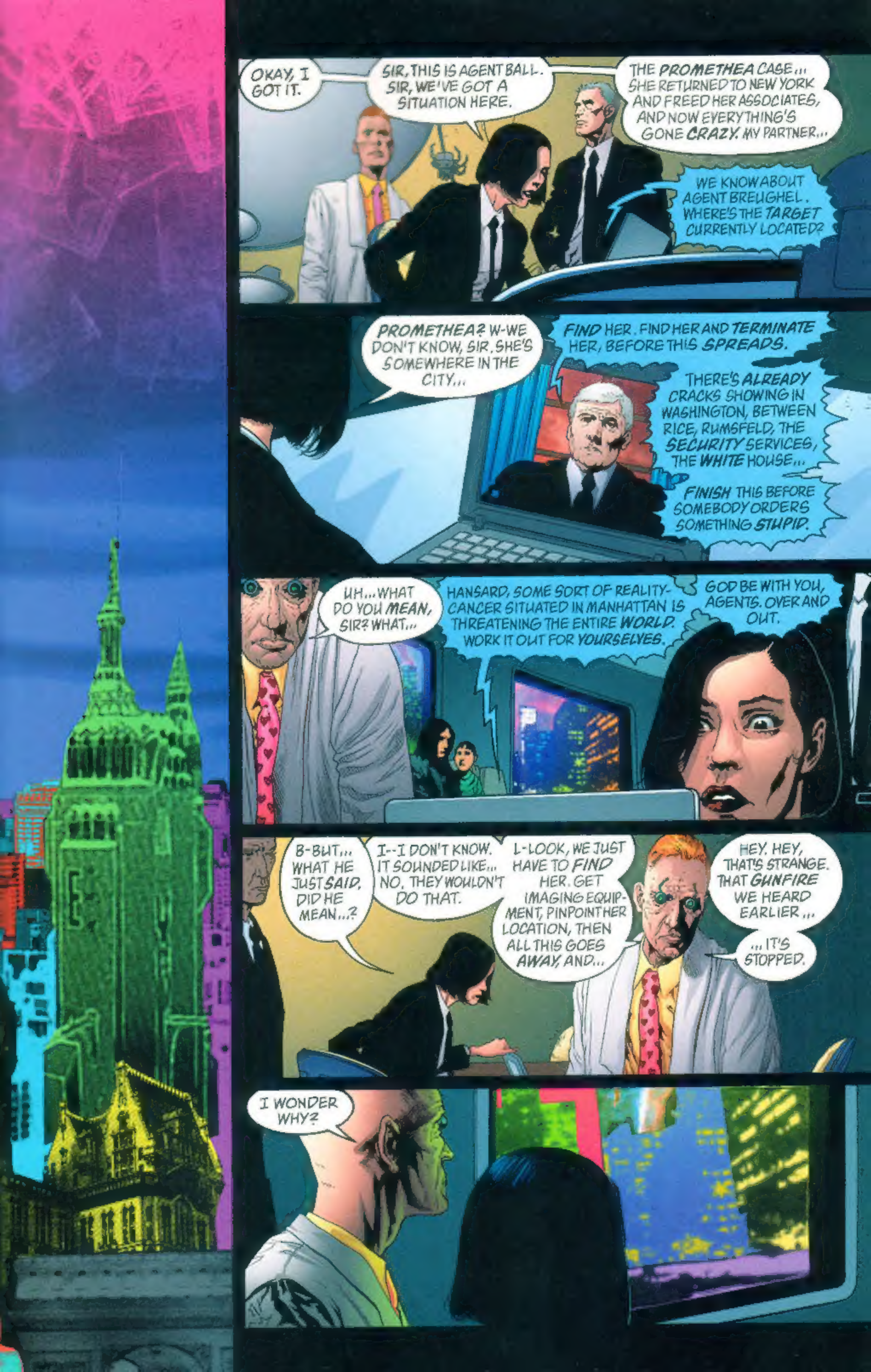
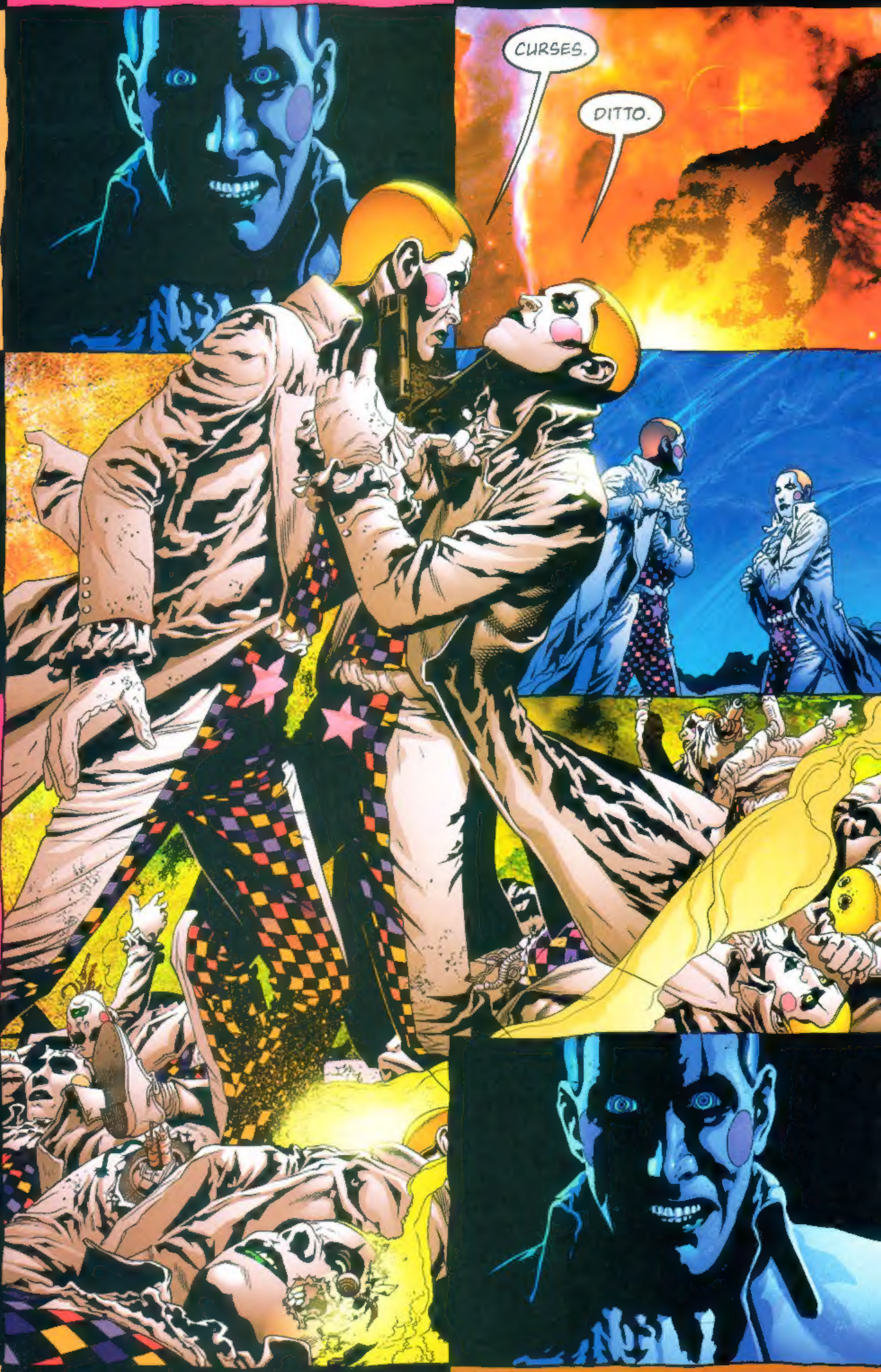

MARV, THAT SOUNDS LIKE A LOT OF GUNFIRE FROM DOWN RIVER...
THAT'LL BE THE DOLLS ALL WAKING UP. PROBABLY THEY'RE MOWING DOWN EVENING STROLLERS.
STAN, YOU PSYCHOPATHIC BASTARD! HOW COULD YOU UNLEASH ALL THIS?
ROGER'S GOT SCIENCE-STRENGTH, SO SHE'S OUR MUSCLE. KENNETH'S OUR TELEPATH. THIS IS ALL FINE WITH ME.
BUT YOU! YOU'RE OUR GENIUS? HOW COME? WHAT DID YOU DO?
I MADE THE RAY-GUNS, THE HOVER-PLATFORM, THE SATELLITE...
I MADE THE DOLLS, MARV!

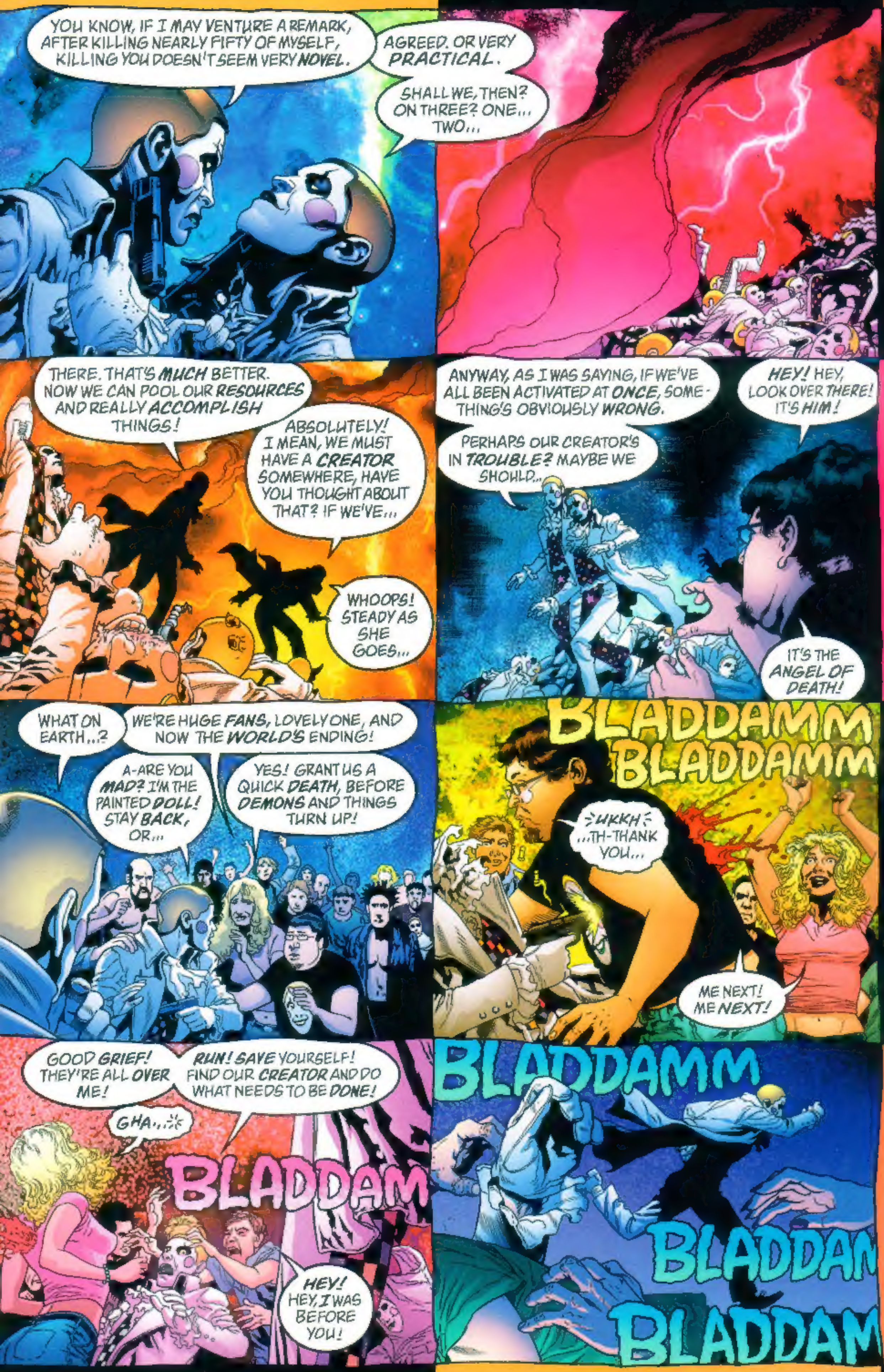

MARV, IT'S REALLY *SIMPLE:* I *HATE* YOU. I HATE *ALL* YOU GUYS, BUT ESPECIALLY *YOU.*
I MEAN, *BOB* HAD ALL THE *MONEY* SO HE WAS THE *LEADER,* UNTIL THAT STOCK MEETING AT THE *WTC* ON 9-11.
BUT THAT'S FAIR ENOUGH.
SO THAT'S WHY THE DOLL ONLY TRIED TO KILL *ME*...AND WHY *SMILIAC* HAD TO DIE BEFORE HE UNWITTINGLY GAVE YOUR MULTIPLE-BODY *GAME* AWAY.
MARV, WHAT ARE WE GOING TO *DO?* THAT GUNFIRE FROM DOWN *RIVER*...
...IT SOUNDS LIKE THE WHOLE *CITY'S* GOING TO HELL.

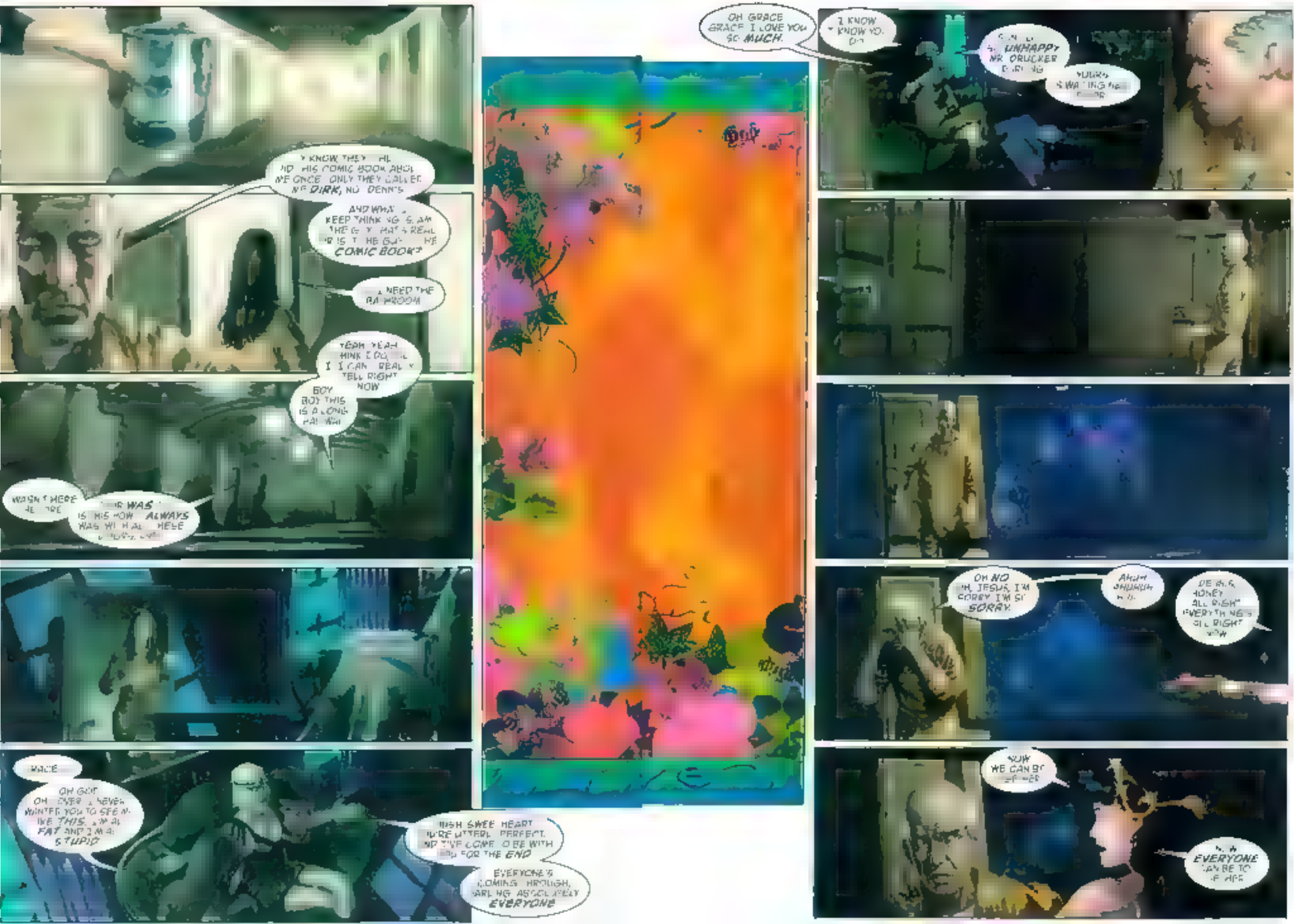

IS THAT FIREWORKS? OR IS IT GUNS OR SOMETHING?
I-IS THERE A WAR GOING ON OUT THERE?
MAYBE.
MAYBE IT'S ALL THE WARS MANKIND EVER HAD, AND THEY'RE ALL ALWAYS HAPPENING RIGHT NOW.
MAYBE IT'S ALWAYS THE END OF THE WORLD.
I CAN'T STAND THIS! I CAN'T STAND WHAT'S INSIDE MY HEAD!
DENNIS, YOU DON'T HAVE A CHOICE. THERE'S NOWHERE TO ESCAPE TO.
WHAT'S INSIDE OUR HEADS AND WHAT'S OUTSIDE...I THINK THAT'S THE SAME PLACE NOW.
PERHAPS IT ALWAYS WAS.
SOPHIE... E-EVERYTHING LOOKS DIFFERENT...
YES. SPACE AND TIME, OURSELVES, OUR WHOLE WORLD... THESE THINGS ONLY EVER EXISTED IN OUR PERCEPTIONS.
NOW THOSE PERCEPTIONS ARE CHANGING.
B-BUT, I HEAR THIS WHOLE PLACE. IT'S LIKE IT IS IN MY DREAMS...
IT'S LIKE THE ROOM, THE WHOLE BUILDING, IT'S SORT OF INFINITELY BIG, AND THERE'S DOORS WHERE THERE AREN'T ANY AND STUFF...
YEAH, I HAVE DREAMS LIKE THAT. THE BIG HOUSE WITH THE WEIRD CLUTTERED STAIRS AND HALLWAYS, AND YOU'RE ALWAYS CLIMBING OR SOMETHING.
YEAH, AND...AND SOMEHOW I ALWAYS LEAVE THE PEOPLE I'M WITH, JUST FOR A MINUTE, AND I NEVER FIND THEM AGAIN.
AND...AND YOU KIND OF GET LOST...
I HAD THAT. I HAD THAT EXACT SAME DREAM, ABOUT THE HOUSE.
A-AND SOME OF THE ROOMS ARE LIKE YOUR PARENTS' HOUSE, OR THE SCHOOL YOU WENT TO...
YEAH. THE HOUSE... IT'S OUR LIFE, ISN'T IT?
IT'S LIKE OUR WHOLE LIFE HAPPENING AT ONCE, WITH ALL THE DIFFERENT ROOMS STACK TOGETHER.
OUR LIFE. AND ALL THIS TIME, THIS IS WHERE WE'VE BEEN, IN THAT HOUSE...
Y'KNOW, SHE WAS RIGHT. EVERYBODY'S GETTING LOST.
YES. I THINK THAT'S MEANT TO HAPPEN.
JACK, THIS FEELS LIKE THE IMMATERIA...
YEAH. IT'S GETTING CLOSER, THE MOMENT WHEN EVERYBODY'S CONSCIOUSNESS SHIFTS FROM THE EARTHLY PLANE TO THE HIGHER SPHERES ABOVE.
WE'RE NEARLY THERE.
THE BIG THIRTY-TWO. THE GRAND FINALE. THE MATERIAL WORLD'S END.
THE OPENING OF THE THIRTY-SECOND PATH IS ALMOST HERE, SOPHIE...AND WE'RE ALL COMING ALONG ON THIS ONE.
EVERY SINGLE ONE OF US.

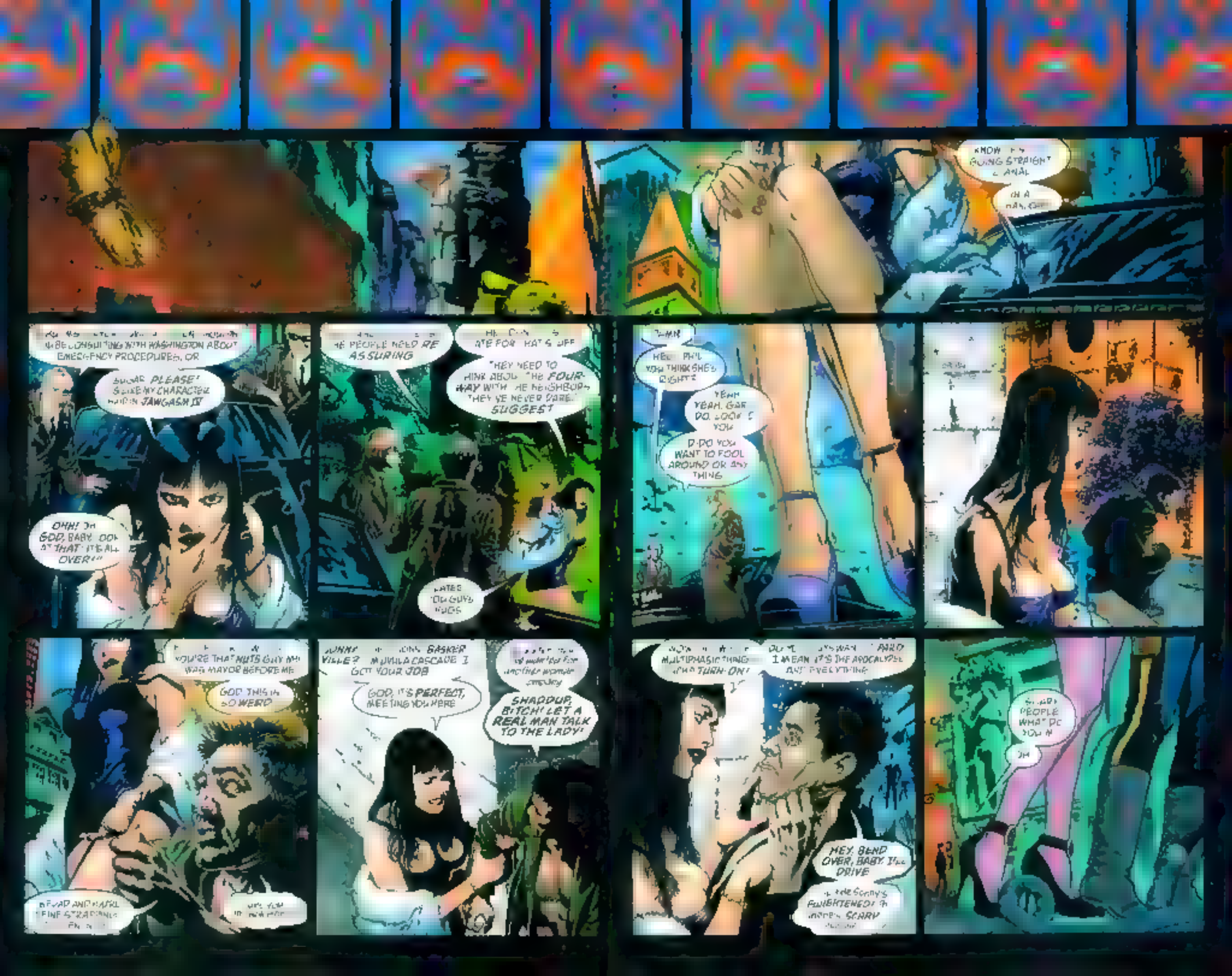

DON'T LET GO!
DON'T LET GO OF ME!
KAREN, SWEETHEART, WE'RE ALL RIGHT HERE...
MOMMY...
DON'T LET GO! IF YOU LET GO, I'LL SLIP BACK DOWN INTO...
OH GOD. OH GOD, DON'T LET ME END UP ON THAT ROOF.
I THINK THAT WE'VE DONE ALL THAT WE CAN FOR YOUR PARTNER, AGENT BALL.
I MEAN, WE GOT HER TO A HOSPITAL AND SHE'S WITH HER FAMILY.
WE NEED TO CONTACT WASHINGTON, GET A HANDLE ON WHAT IS HAPPENING HERE.
YEAH. YEAH, YOU'RE RIGHT.
JESUS. I--I NEVER SAW ANYBODY AS TERRIFIED AS KAREN IS BEFORE.
NO? WELL, THE NURSE I SPOKE TO SAID CASES LIKE AGENT BREUGHEL WERE POURING IN TONIGHT.
LISTEN, I HAVE A SECURE LINE TO WASHINGTON SET UP IN RECEPTION...
YEAH, OKAY.
GOD, WHAT IS THIS? IT'S NOT GAS, IT'S NOT A DISEASE...
I DON'T KNOW. IF IT'S SEIZURES CAUSED BY AN ELECTROMAGNETIC FIELD, THEN AT LEAST IT'S SOMETHING OUTSIDE US DOING THIS.
BECAUSE IF IT'S COMING FROM INSIDE US, THAT WOULD MEAN...
AGENT HANSARD? AGENT BALL? WE HAVE THE DIRECTOR GENERAL ON THE LINE.

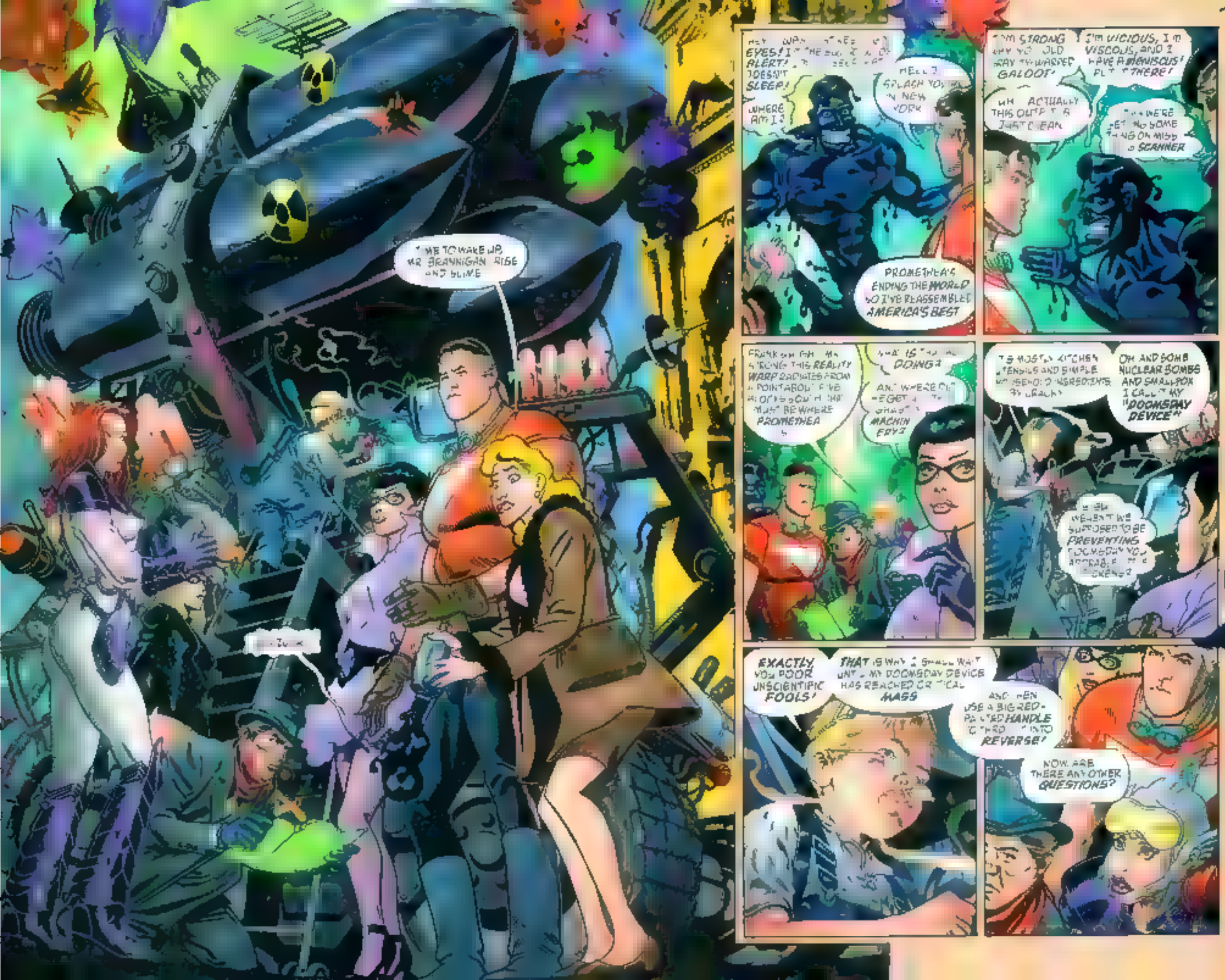

OKAY, I GOT IT.
SIR, THIS IS AGENT BALL. SIR, WE'VE GOT A SITUATION HERE.
THE PROMETHEA CASE... SHE RETURNED TO NEW YORK AND FREED HER ASSOCIATES, AND NOW EVERYTHING'S GONE CRAZY. MY PARTNER...
WE KNOW ABOUT AGENT BREUGHEL. WHERE'S THE TARGET CURRENTLY LOCATED?
PROMETHEA? W-WE DON'T KNOW, SIR. SHE'S SOMEWHERE IN THE CITY...
FIND HER. FIND HER AND TERMINATE HER, BEFORE THIS SPREADS.
THERE'S ALREADY CRACKS SHOWING IN WASHINGTON, BETWEEN RICE, RUMSFELD, THE SECURITY SERVICES, THE WHITE HOUSE...
FINISH THIS BEFORE SOMEBODY ORDERS SOMETHING STUPID.
UH...WHAT DO YOU MEAN, SIR? WHAT...
HANSARD, SOME SORT OF REALITY-CANCER SITUATED IN MANHATTAN IS THREATENING THE ENTIRE WORLD. WORK IT OUT FOR YOURSELVES.
GOD BE WITH YOU, AGENTS. OVER AND OUT.
B-BUT... WHAT HE JUST SAID. DID HE MEAN...?
I--I DON'T KNOW. IT SOUNDED LIKE... NO, THEY WOULDN'T DO THAT.
L-LOOK, WE JUST HAVE TO FIND HER. GET IMAGING EQUIPMENT, PINPOINT HER LOCATION, THEN ALL THIS GOES AWAY, AND...
HEY. HEY, THAT'S STRANGE. THAT GUNFIRE WE HEARD EARLIER...
...IT'S STOPPED.
I WONDER WHY?

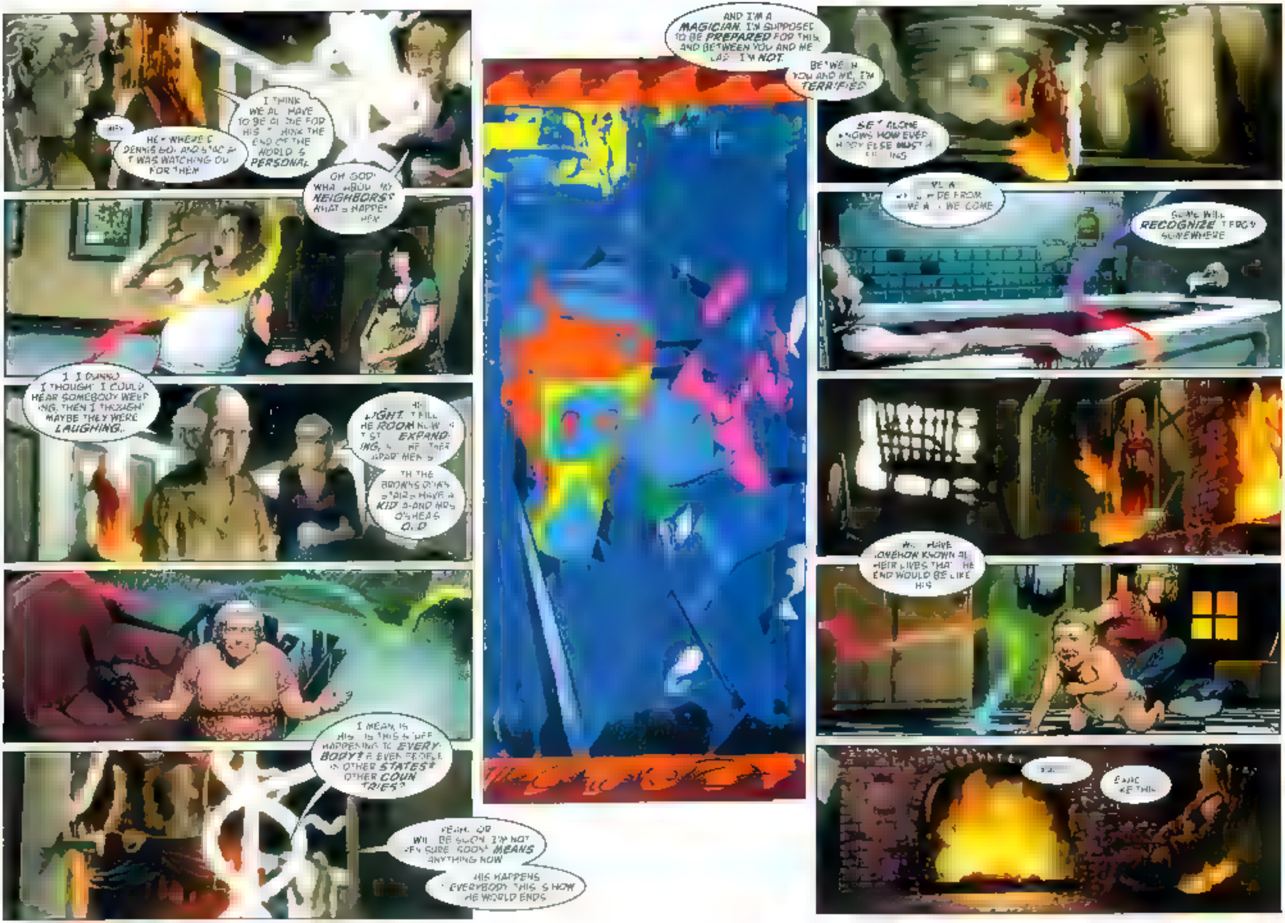

CURSES.
DITTO.

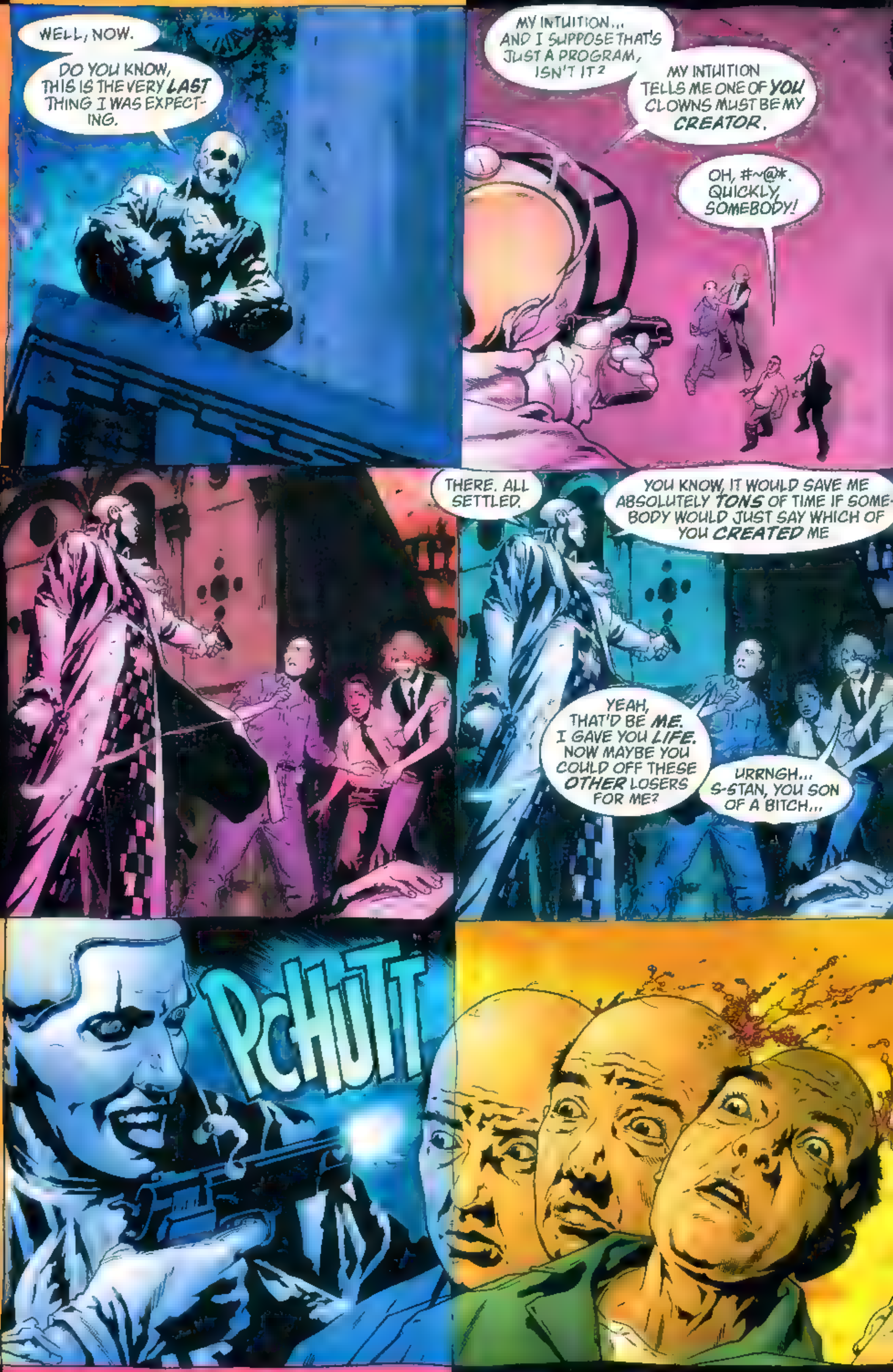

YOU KNOW, IF I MAY VENTURE A REMARK, AFTER KILLING NEARLY FIFTY OF MYSELF, KILLING YOU DOESN'T SEEM VERY *NOVEL*.
AGREED. OR VERY *PRACTICAL*.
SHALL WE, THEN? ON THREE? ONE... TWO...
THERE. THAT'S *MUCH* BETTER. NOW WE CAN POOL OUR *RESOURCES* AND REALLY *ACCOMPLISH* THINGS!
ABSOLUTELY! I MEAN, WE MUST HAVE A *CREATOR* SOMEWHERE, HAVE YOU THOUGHT ABOUT THAT? IF WE'VE...
WHOOPS! STEADY AS SHE GOES...
ANYWAY, AS I WAS SAYING, IF WE'VE ALL BEEN ACTIVATED AT *ONCE*, SOMETHING'S OBVIOUSLY *WRONG*.
PERHAPS OUR CREATOR'S IN *TROUBLE*? MAYBE WE SHOULD...
HEY! HEY, LOOK OVER THERE! IT'S *HIM*!
IT'S THE *ANGEL OF DEATH*!
WHAT ON EARTH...?
WE'RE HUGE *FANS*, LOVELY ONE, AND NOW THE *WORLD'S* ENDING!
A-ARE YOU *MAD*? I'M THE PAINTED *DOLL*! STAY *BACK*, OR...
YES! GRANT US A QUICK *DEATH*, BEFORE *DEMONS* AND THINGS TURN UP!
BLADDAMM
BLADDAMM
UKKH ...TH-THANK YOU...
ME NEXT! ME *NEXT*!
GOOD *GRIEF*! THEY'RE ALL *OVER* ME!
RUN! *SAVE* YOURSELF! FIND OUR *CREATOR* AND DO WHAT NEEDS TO BE *DONE*!
GHA...
BLADDAM
HEY! HEY, I WAS BEFORE YOU!
BLADDAMM
BLADDAM
BLADDAM

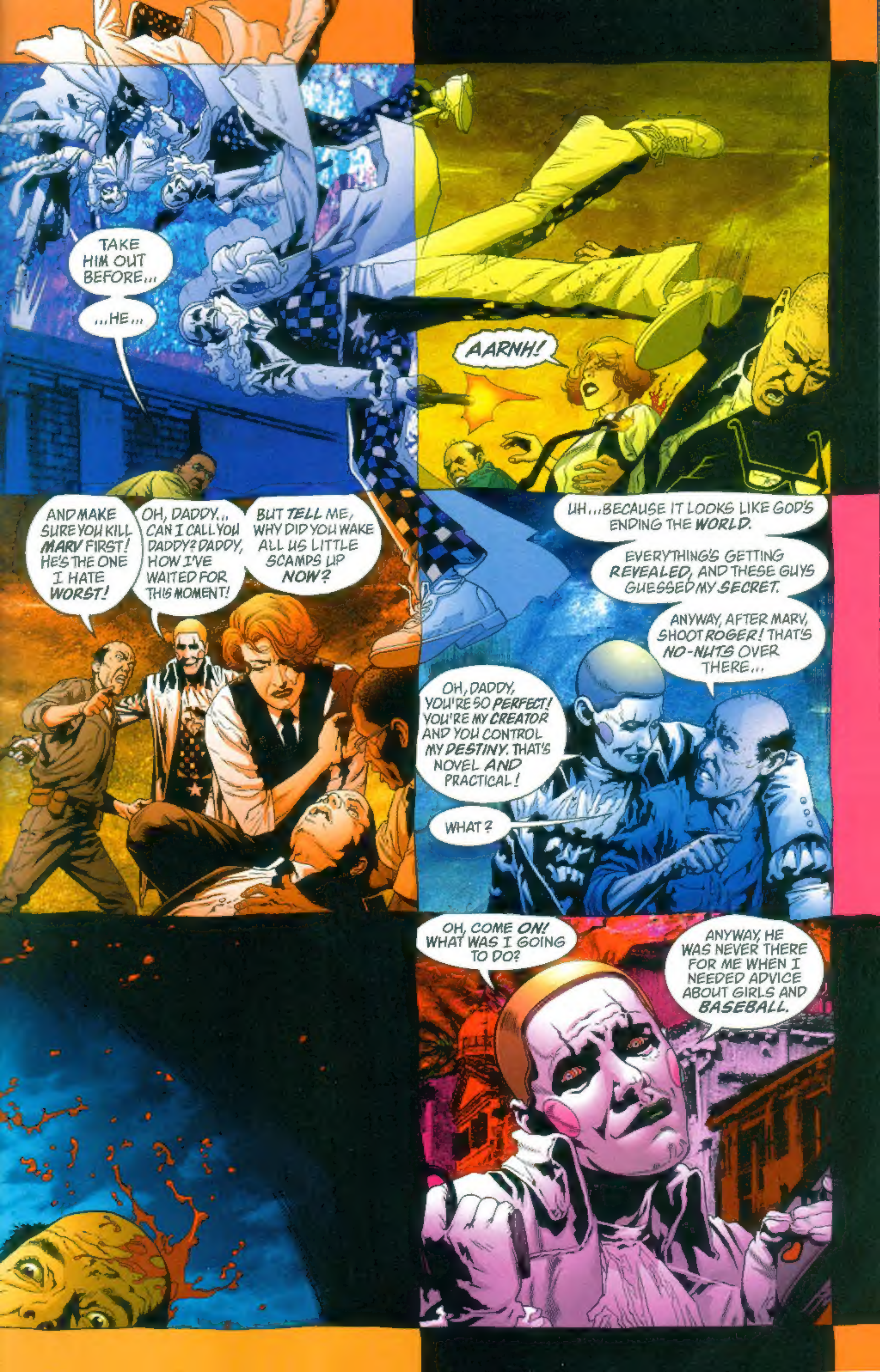

I KNOW THEY ... DID THIS COMIC BOOK ABOUT ME ONCE. ONLY THEY CALLED ME DIRK, NOT DENNIS.
AND WHAT I KEEP THINKING IS, AM I THE GUY THAT'S REAL OR IS IT THE GUY IN THE COMIC BOOK?
... I NEED THE BATHROOM.
YEAH YEAH ... THINK I DO ... I ... I CAN'T REALLY TELL RIGHT NOW.
BOY. BOY THIS IS A LONG HALLWAY.
WASN'T HERE BEFORE.
... WAS ... IS THIS NOW ... ALWAYS WAS ... HERE ...
GRACE ...
OH GOD. OH ... EVER ... I NEVER WANTED YOU TO SEE ME LIKE THIS. I'M ALL FAT AND I'M ALL STUPID.
HUSH SWEETHEART. YOU'RE UTTERLY PERFECT. AND I'VE COME TO BE WITH YOU FOR THE END.
EVERYONE'S COMING THROUGH, DARLING. ABSOLUTELY EVERYONE.
OH GRACE GRACE I LOVE YOU SO MUCH.
I KNOW. I KNOW YOU DO.
... UNHAPPY MR DRUCKER, DARLING.
YOUR'S WAITING ... DOOR.
OH NO. OH, JESUS, I'M SORRY. I'M SO SORRY.
AHHH SHHHHH ... NO.
DEAR ... HONEY. ALL RIGHT. EVERYTHING'S ALL RIGHT NOW.
NOW WE CAN BE ... OF HER.
... EVERYONE CAN BE ... OF HER.

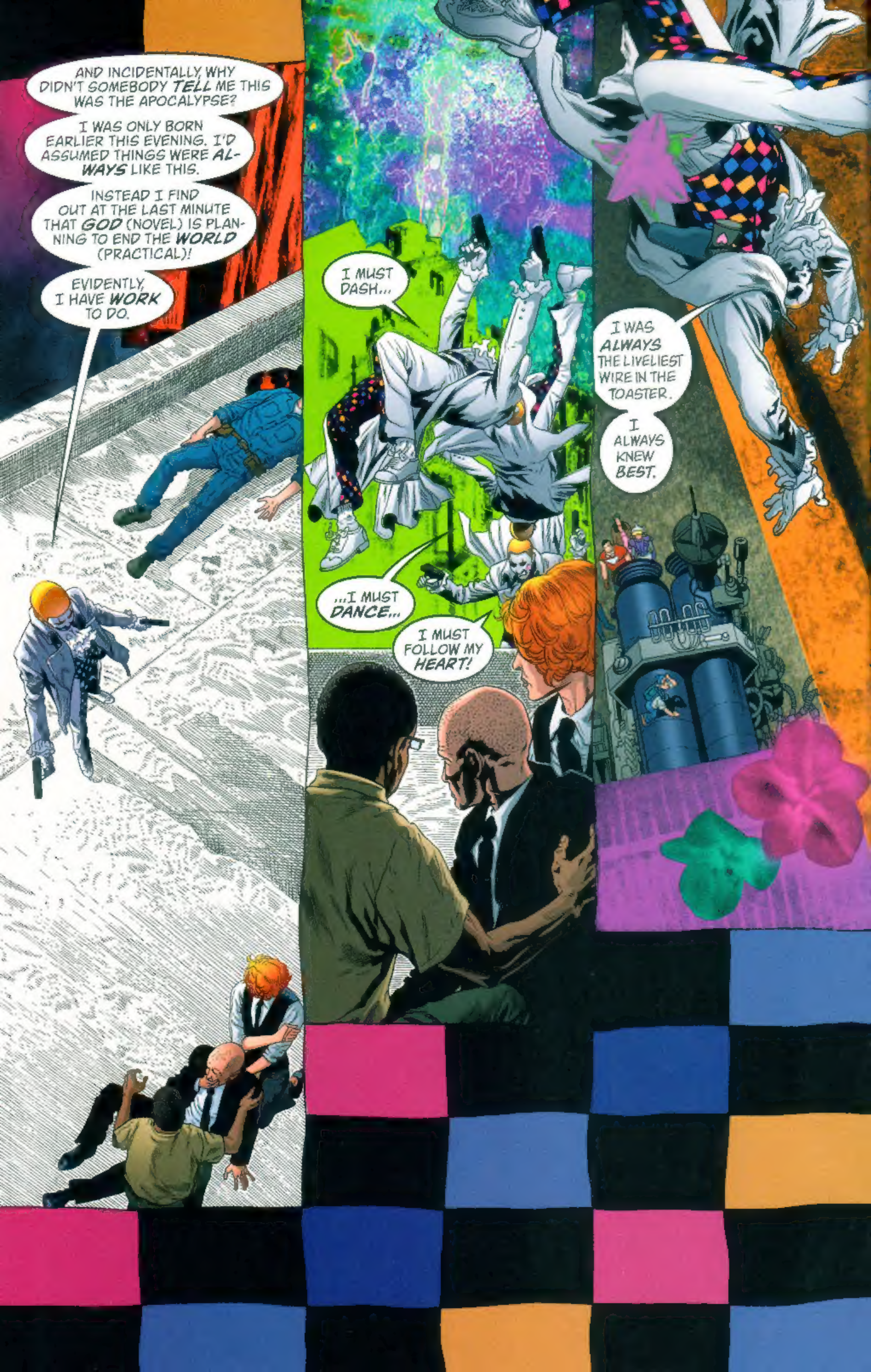

KNOW [illegible] GOING STRAIGHT [illegible] ANAL
IN A [illegible]
[illegible] BE CONSULTING WITH WASHINGTON ABOUT EMERGENCY PROCEDURES, OR
SUGAR, PLEASE! [illegible] MY CHARACTER [illegible] IN JAWGASM IV
OHH! OH GOD, BABY, [illegible] THAT! IT'S ALL OVER!
[illegible] THE PEOPLE NEED RE-ASSURING
[illegible] ATE FOR THAT'S OFF
THEY NEED TO THINK ABOUT THE FOUR-WAY WITH THE NEIGHBORS THEY'VE NEVER DARED SUGGEST
[illegible] YOU GUYS [illegible]
DAMN
HEY PHIL YOU THINK SHE'S RIGHT?
YEAH YEAH. GAR DO. LOOK [illegible] YOU
D-DO YOU WANT TO FOOL AROUND OR ANYTHING
[illegible] YOU'RE THAT NUTS GUY WHO WAS MAYOR BEFORE ME
GOD THIS IS SO WEIRD
[illegible] AND [illegible] FINE STRAPPING [illegible]
[illegible] YOU [illegible]
JOHNNY [illegible] BASKERVILLE? [illegible] CASCADE I GOT YOUR JOB
GOD, IT'S PERFECT, MEETING YOU HERE
[illegible] another woman [illegible]
SHADDUP, BITCH! LET A REAL MAN TALK TO THE LADY!
[illegible] MULTIPHASIC THING [illegible] TURN-ON!
[illegible] HARD I MEAN IT'S THE APOCALYPSE AND EVERYTHING
HEY, BEND OVER, BABY. I'LL DRIVE
[illegible] FRIGHTENED [illegible] SCARY
SCARY PEOPLE WHAT DO YOU [illegible]
OH

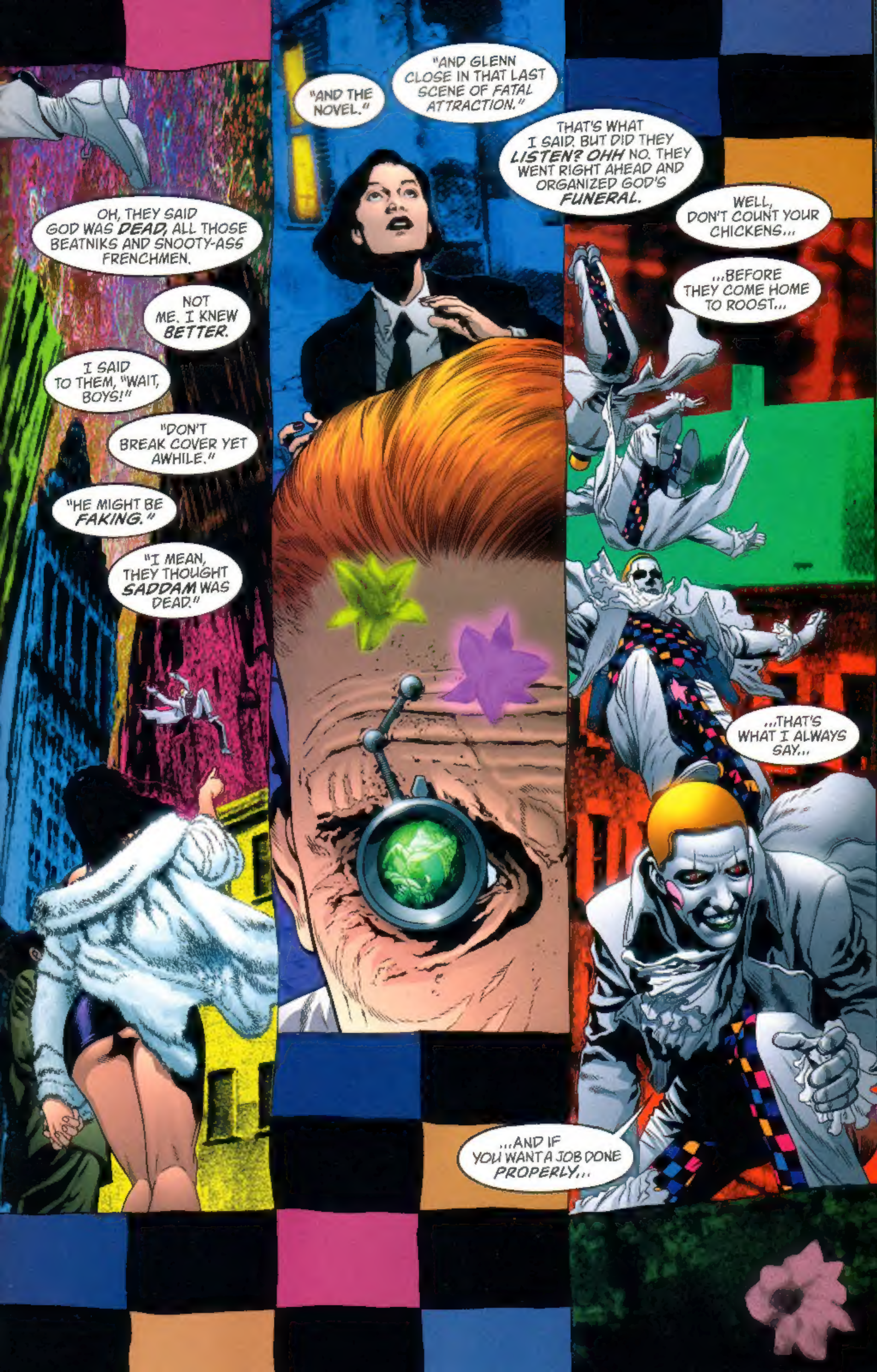

TIME TO WAKE UP, MR. BRANNIGAN. RISE AND SLIME.
HEY [illegible] EYES! I'M THE [illegible] ALERT! [illegible] DOESN'T SLEEP!
WHERE AM I?
HELLO SPLASH. YOU'RE IN NEW YORK.
PROMETHEA'S ENDING THE WORLD SO I'VE REASSEMBLED AMERICA'S BEST.
TOM STRONG! WHY YOU OLD [illegible] GALOOT!
I'M VICIOUS, I'M VISCOUS, AND I HAVE A MENISCUS! PUT IT THERE!
UH... ACTUALLY THIS OUTFIT IS JUST CLEAN.
[illegible] WE'RE GETTING SOMETHING ON MISS [illegible] SCANNER
FRANK [illegible] MR. STRONG, THIS REALITY WARP RADIATES FROM A POINT ABOUT FIVE BLOCKS SOUTH. THAT MUST BE WHERE PROMETHEA IS.
WHAT IS THAT [illegible] DOING? AND WHERE DID HE GET ALL THAT [illegible] MACHINERY?
IT'S MOSTLY KITCHEN UTENSILS AND SIMPLE HOUSEHOLD INGREDIENTS, BY GRACKY.
OH, AND SOME NUCLEAR BOMBS AND SMALLPOX. I CALL IT MY "DOOMSDAY DEVICE".
B-BUT WEREN'T WE SUPPOSED TO BE PREVENTING DOOMSDAY, YOU ADORABLE LITTLE [illegible]?
EXACTLY, YOU POOR UNSCIENTIFIC FOOLS!
THAT IS WHY I SHALL WAIT UNTIL MY DOOMSDAY DEVICE HAS REACHED CRITICAL MASS
AND THEN USE A BIG RED-PAINTED HANDLE TO THROW IT INTO REVERSE!
NOW, ARE THERE ANY OTHER QUESTIONS?

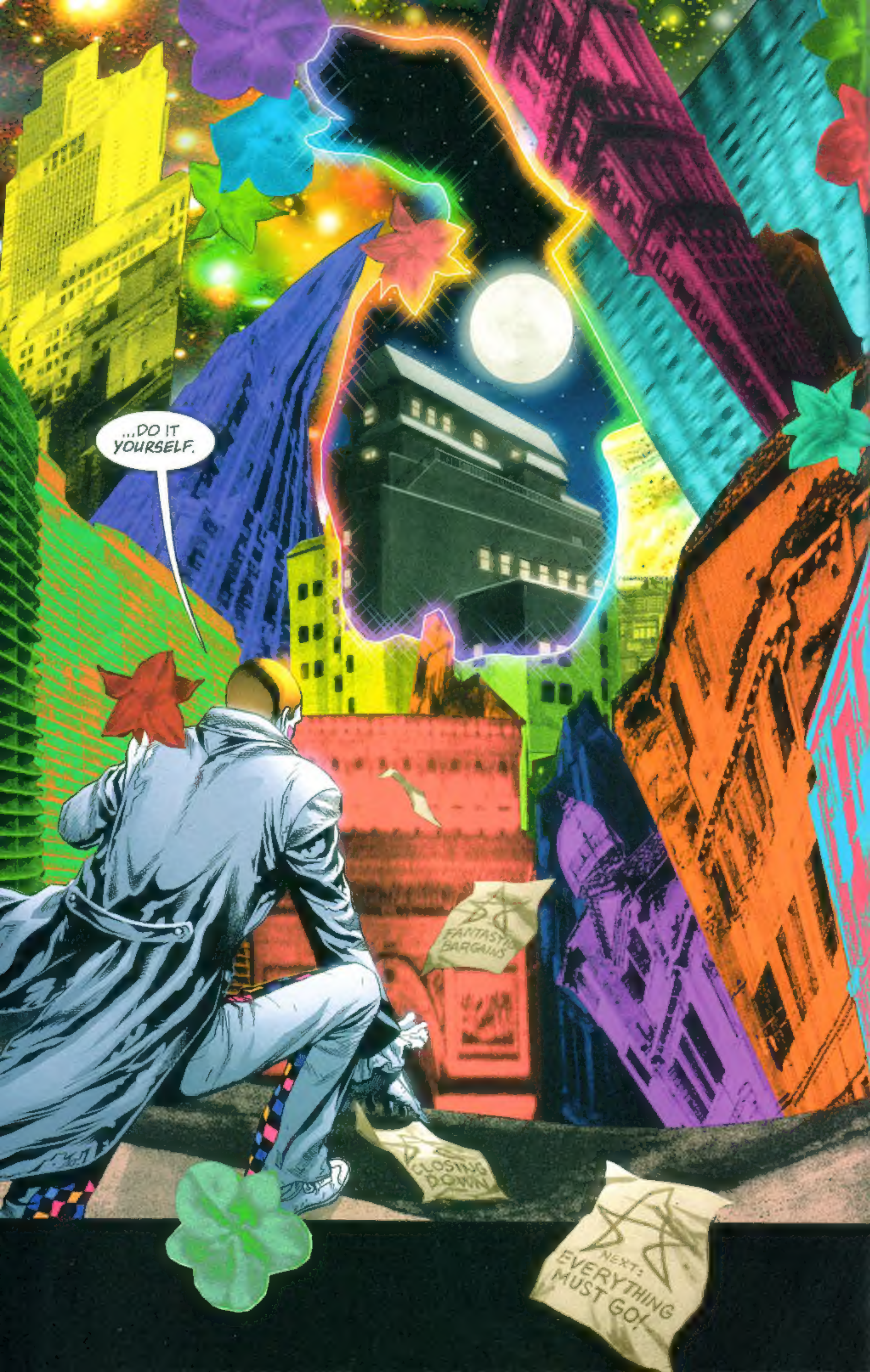

HEY
HEY WHERE'S DENNIS GO? AND STACEY? I WAS WATCHING OUT FOR THEM
I THINK WE ALL HAVE TO BE ALONE FOR THIS. I THINK THE END OF THE WORLD'S PERSONAL
OH GOD! WHAT ABOUT MY NEIGHBORS? WHAT'S HAPPENING?
I-I DUNNO. I THOUGHT I COULD HEAR SOMEBODY WEEPING. THEN I THOUGHT MAYBE THEY WERE LAUGHING..
THE LIGHT. IT FILLS THE ROOM NOW. IT'S JUST EXPANDING, LIKE THE APARTMENTS
WITH THE BROWNS DOWNSTAIRS HAVE A KID? AND MRS O'SHEA'S O.D.
I MEAN, IS THIS IS THIS JUST HAPPENING TO EVERYBODY? ARE EVEN PEOPLE IN OTHER STATES? OTHER COUNTRIES?
YEAH. OR WILL BE SOON. I'M NOT EVEN SURE "SOON" MEANS ANYTHING NOW
THIS HAPPENS TO EVERYBODY. THIS IS HOW THE WORLD ENDS
AND I'M A MAGICIAN. I'M SUPPOSED TO BE PREPARED FOR THIS. AND BETWEEN YOU AND ME LADY, I'M NOT
BETWEEN YOU AND ME, I'M TERRIFIED
SET ALONE KNOWS HOW EVERYBODY ELSE MUST BE FEELING
WE LEAVE FROM WHERE WE COME
SOME WILL RECOGNIZE IT FROM SOMEWHERE
WE HAVE SOMEHOW KNOWN ALL THEIR LIVES THAT THE END WOULD BE LIKE THIS
EARC ...E THIS


WELL, NOW.
DO YOU KNOW, THIS IS THE VERY *LAST* THING I WAS EXPECTING.
MY INTUITION... AND I SUPPOSE THAT'S JUST A PROGRAM, ISN'T IT?
MY INTUITION TELLS ME ONE OF *YOU* CLOWNS MUST BE MY *CREATOR*.
OH, #~@*. QUICKLY, SOMEBODY!
THERE. ALL SETTLED.
YOU KNOW, IT WOULD SAVE ME ABSOLUTELY *TONS* OF TIME IF SOMEBODY WOULD JUST SAY WHICH OF YOU *CREATED* ME
YEAH, THAT'D BE *ME*. I GAVE YOU *LIFE*. NOW MAYBE YOU COULD OFF THESE *OTHER* LOSERS FOR ME?
URRNGH... S-STAN, YOU SON OF A BITCH...
PCHUTT


TAKE HIM OUT BEFORE...
...HE...
AARNH!
AND MAKE SURE YOU KILL MARV FIRST! HE'S THE ONE I HATE WORST!
OH, DADDY... CAN I CALL YOU DADDY? DADDY, HOW I'VE WAITED FOR THIS MOMENT!
BUT TELL ME, WHY DID YOU WAKE ALL US LITTLE SCAMPS UP NOW?
UH...BECAUSE IT LOOKS LIKE GOD'S ENDING THE WORLD.
EVERYTHING'S GETTING REVEALED, AND THESE GUYS GUESSED MY SECRET.
ANYWAY, AFTER MARV, SHOOT ROGER! THAT'S NO-NUTS OVER THERE...
OH, DADDY, YOU'RE SO PERFECT! YOU'RE MY CREATOR AND YOU CONTROL MY DESTINY. THAT'S NOVEL AND PRACTICAL!
WHAT?
OH, COME ON! WHAT WAS I GOING TO DO?
ANYWAY, HE WAS NEVER THERE FOR ME WHEN I NEEDED ADVICE ABOUT GIRLS AND BASEBALL.


AND INCIDENTALLY, WHY DIDN'T SOMEBODY TELL ME THIS WAS THE APOCALYPSE?
I WAS ONLY BORN EARLIER THIS EVENING. I'D ASSUMED THINGS WERE ALWAYS LIKE THIS.
INSTEAD I FIND OUT AT THE LAST MINUTE THAT GOD (NOVEL) IS PLANNING TO END THE WORLD (PRACTICAL)!
EVIDENTLY, I HAVE WORK TO DO.
I MUST DASH...
...I MUST DANCE...
I MUST FOLLOW MY HEART!
I WAS ALWAYS THE LIVELIEST WIRE IN THE TOASTER.
I ALWAYS KNEW BEST.


OH, THEY SAID GOD WAS ***DEAD,*** ALL THOSE BEATNIKS AND SNOOTY-ASS FRENCHMEN.
NOT ME. I KNEW ***BETTER.***
I SAID TO THEM, "WAIT, BOYS!"
"DON'T BREAK COVER YET AWHILE."
"HE MIGHT BE ***FAKING.***"
"I MEAN, THEY THOUGHT ***SADDAM*** WAS DEAD."
"AND THE NOVEL."
"AND GLENN CLOSE IN THAT LAST SCENE OF *FATAL ATTRACTION.*"
THAT'S WHAT I SAID. BUT DID THEY ***LISTEN? OHH*** NO. THEY WENT RIGHT AHEAD AND ORGANIZED GOD'S ***FUNERAL.***
WELL, DON'T COUNT YOUR CHICKENS...
...BEFORE THEY COME HOME TO ROOST...
...THAT'S WHAT I ALWAYS SAY...
...AND IF YOU WANT A JOB DONE ***PROPERLY...***


...DO IT YOURSELF.
FANTASTIC BARGAINS
CLOSING DOWN
NEXT: EVERYTHING MUST GO!